DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 875 CS 503 894

AUTHOR Burgess, Roma; And Others
TITLE Drama and Theatre: A Shared Role in Learning.
INSTITUTION Victoria Education Dept. (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-7241-4352-1
PUB DATE Feb 82
NOTE 40p.; Prepared by the Joint Standing Committee for Drama in Schools.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Development; Creative Expression; *Curriculum; *Dramatic Play; *Dramatics; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; Self Expression; *Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS Audience Awareness; Audience Response; *Drama in Education

ABSTRACT

With the development of educational drama and the popularization of differing drama theorists, an uneasiness has developed in teachers' minds concerning the relationship between drama and theatre. This unsasiness is manifested by the polarization of opinion as to whether the focus of drama should be an orientation towards process or product. It should be noted that the process of the symbolic creation of meaning by the child through dramatic play is linked with the product of its expression. Neither the one nor the other assumes a dominant position in the role relationship and the natural building of understanding. It is the child's natural ability to spontaneously adopt roles and learn through dramatic activity that forms the basis of drama-in-education curricula. The creation of meaning and change in understanding that may occur through dramatic activity will be directly affected by the personal experiences and knowledge brought to the activity by the child, actor, and audience. The use of an audience in drama-in-education deepens and broadens the learning focus. It is also important to stress that there are categories of drama that offer important, but general, insights into the student's development through drama. To fully exploit the learning potential of drama, teachers must also consider theatre. As students progress in drama, they feel an increasingly earnest desire to refine personal meaning and to shape it through the constraints of the art form. The private nature of children's dramatic activity changes to acknowledge the public, social world of others. It is in this social context that the creative, communicative function of theatre is needed as a further extension of the learning experience. (HOD)

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DRAMA AND THEATRE : A SHARED ROLE IN LEARNING

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ROMA BURGESS
HELEN COLLINS
PAMELA GAUDRY
ANTHONY TARTARO

CS503891K

February 1982

ISBN 0 7241 4352 1

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The graphic talent of PETER FULLERTON is gratefully acknowledged.

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DRAMA & THEATRE: A SHARED ROLE IN LEARNING

1. RATIONALE

In recent times, with the development of educational drama and the popularization of differing drama theorists, an uneasiness appears to have developed in teachers' minds concerning the relationship between Drama and Theatre.

The result of this uneasiness has been manifested by the polarization of opinion as to whether the focus of drama should be an orientation towards process or product.

It was felt that this dichotomy had to be re-examined in the light of current drama theory, theories of child development, and the realities of classroom practice. Using these as a framework, this paper is an attempt to clarify and articulate this relationship in a way that is directly accessible and applicable to teachers.

This paper is not intended to be a definitive statement, but rather should be seen as a vehicle to allow teachers to question and refine their own understandings and responses in this area.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Dramatic activity has been a part of human life from its earliest stages - in ritual, religion and dance. What we now know as Educational Drama, however, is a comparatively recent phenomenon.

Caldwell Cook was among a small group of educators who saw a direct relationship between play and dramatic activity (Courtney 1974). These educators based their work on the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Rabelais and Rousseau, all of whom emphasized play in education. Cook, in The Play Way (1914), was chiefly responsible for the formation of the basic idea that dramatic activity was an effective method of learning. In the past, dramatic studies had emphasized technical production skills, theatre history and dramatic literature and were tied to the English syllabus.

During the 1920s and 1930s, English schools experimented with the notion of "free play". But during the 1950s, Peter Slade and E.J. Burton developed firm concepts that were to alter the structure of dramatic activity in schools. They believed that dramatic play was a highly personalized activity-centred means of learning and, as such, merited a separate place on the school timetable and was not simply a method for teaching other disciplines.

When the Plowden Report (1954) criticised school curricula for its obsession with content as a basis for planning, recommendations were made for educational programmes that placed the child's development at the centre of curriculum decision making.

In the midst of this educational climate, the basic theories and practices of Peter Slade (1954) were developed and extended by Brian Way (1967). This interest in dramatic activity as a tool for personal development led to the growth of teacher training courses in Drama.

With the implementation of these theories in the classroom, "drama" came to be perceived as synonymous with "personal development", "self-expression" and "interpersonal communication". It was the development of these qualities through the process of dramatic activity which was deemed to be educationally significant; the product, performance, was not.

Theatre not only came to be viewed as an extra-curricular activity, but its contribution to the child's personal development was seriously questioned by drama teachers. Words such as "actors", "audience" and "making a play" were a source of embarrassment to teachers and "doing a school play" was anathema indeed.

In the 1970s, lively debate continued and gave rise to increasingly sophisticated analyses of dramatic activity and its relationship with learning (Bolton, Wagner, Courtney, McGregor, Tate and Robinson). However, the learning aspects of theatre and its relationship with educational drama were largely ignored.

An uneasiness began to develop in teachers' minds concerning the orientation of drama programmes. Many teachers found that the "process approach" to drama limited the students' potential for development and denied drama its aesthetic, artistic merits. In the classroom, teachers were aware that their students were struggling to master the problems of form and constantly sought advice related to skills and technique. This need was seen to intensify as students' participation in drama progressed into the middle and upper levels of the school curriculum.

For many drama teachers this dilemma remains unresolved and has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the focus of drama programmes.

3.0 THE ROLE OF DRAMA AND THEATRE IN THE CREATION OF MEANING

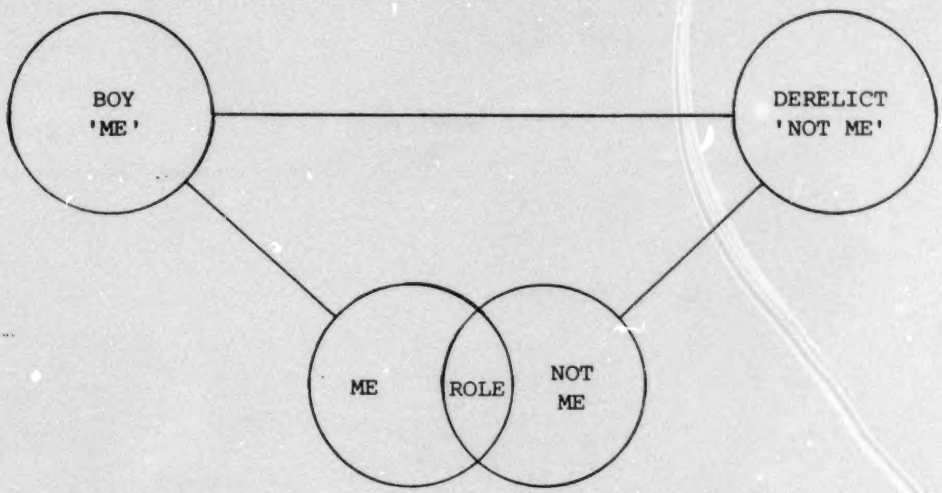
3.1 INTRODUCTION - THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP

Educational Drama and Theatre both arise out of the same human desire to order experience and make sense of existence. Each serve to increase personal understanding and expand awareness of man's relationship with the universe. Each offer moments in time where issues of human concern are made manifest in a dramatic context which holds the potential for personal symbolic meaning to be created. In both cases the symbolic meaning occurs through a role relationship between the 'me' and 'not me' (Winnicott 1971) and is embedded in the concrete, external words and actions of the role participants.

If we look at an example, this becomes clearer. (It should be noted that although a child is used here, the same process occurs in all role relationships.)

When a Year 8 boy is playing the role of a derelict, he is simultaneously aware that he is himself (the 'me') and that he is playing at being a derelict (the 'not me'). The boy does not give up his 'self' to become the other, but rather projects himself on to the role, extending his notion of self to incorporate that of the role - the derelict.

Figure 1
CREATION OF ROLE (1)



What this boy feels subjectively about being a derelict, his subjective reality, is tested against what he knows about derelicts from his range of experiences, his objective reality. An oscillation occurs in the relationship between the subjective and objective realities, the 'me' and the 'not me', until reconciliation of the two allows for the creation of personal symbolic meaning. This abstract internal meaning is then expressed in the concrete words and actions of the boy in the role as derelict.

Figure 2
CREATION OF ROLE (2)

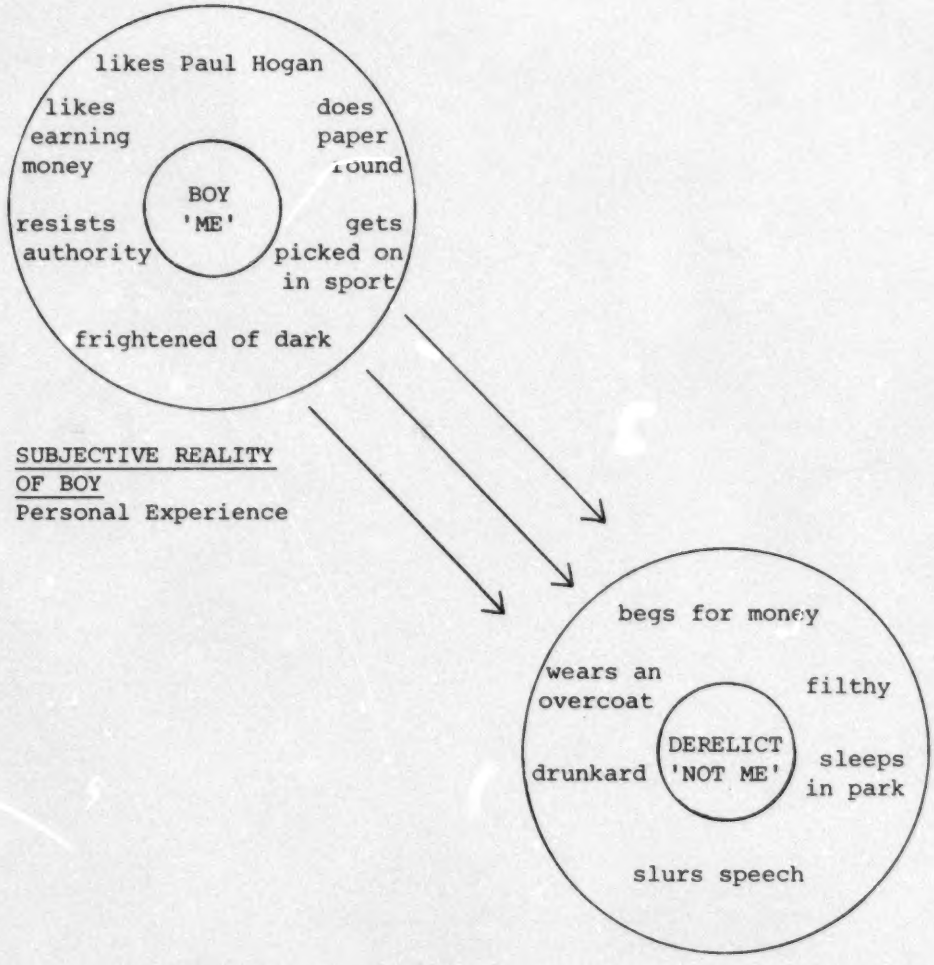
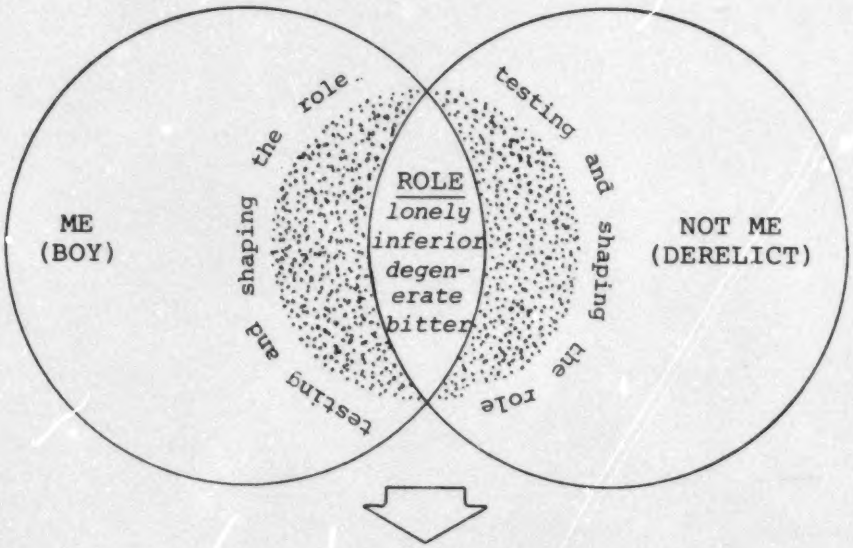


Figure 3
ROLE RELATIONSHIP AND THE CREATION
OF MEANING



EXPRESSED KNOWLEDGE

Concrete action	Abstract inner meaning
(huddled shuffling movements; faltering slow speech)	*(e.g. "I hate people who think they are better than me")*

OBJECTIFICATION OF ROLE

UNDERSTANDING OR
REALISED MEANING

("I've always hated people who think they are better than I am")

So, in an improvisation, when the Year 8 boy, in the role of a derelict, spits contemptuously in the direction of a stuck up lady, these concrete, external actions might represent an internal abstract meaning of, "I hate people who think they're better than me". The potential for a change in understanding is inherent in the activity; it is implied but has not yet been made explicit.

The boy may, at that moment, recognise the full significance of his action and be able to articulate this in discussion (or in some other expressive medium - music or movement, for example). It is also possible, however, this will not occur until some future point. Essential to this change of understanding is the ability to objectify and reflect upon the experience.

This process of the symbolic creation of meaning is, by its very act, inextricably linked with the product of its expression. Neither the one, nor the other, assumes a dominant position in the role relationship and the natural building of understanding.

3.2 THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP IN CHILD PLAY

When children use dramatic play, they adopt role relationships in order to understand their world. During such play, the child is simultaneously spectator of, and participant in, the drama. (The 'me', 'not me'.) There is an internal,subjective meaning which must be approximated in the external action and the child often attempts to refine the expressive symbol through constant repetition of the play. This commitment to repetition reflects a keen desire to find what is judged to be the appropriate form. The abstract, internal meaning seeks concrete expression in the symbol. The meaning, and the expression of it, cannot be separated - they co-exist. To borrow the earlier example, the "I hate people who think they're better than me", cannot be separated from the contemptuous spitting in the direction of the stuck up lady.

In early child play, there is a characteristic sincerity and absorption in the action. The participants are totally unaware of an audience (Slade 1954). They have no need for spectators because the play exists only for the self; it is egocentric and private.

3.3 THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP IN DRAMA IN EDUCATION

It is the child's natural ability to spontaneously adopt role and learn through dramatic activity that forms the basis of drama-in-education curricula. Drama teachers structure situations which allow students to explore ideas and attitudes through the safety of roles. By understanding the nature of the role relationships and the individual development of the class members, the teacher ensures that the dramatic activities have the potential to create symbolic meaning and to alter the understanding of students.

Unlike child play, the dramatic activity of the classroom will not manifest itself in action that is always absorbed and sincere. As the child develops, so does the way in which dramatic play and role is used. At times, the drama will be engaged in for the self alone; at others, the communication to fellow members of the group will be necessary for the fullness of meaning to evolve. Later still, a more public audience for the students' drama will be sought as they grapple with the business of refining the expressive symbol to communicate through the art form.

A more detailed discussion of this will occur later under Dramatic Age Stages (p20).

3.4 THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP IN THEATRE

Dramatic activity in theatre is at all times a conscious manipulation of expressive symbols for the specific purpose of building dramatic tension, and communicating to persons who are fully conscious of their role as an audience. The process of rehearsal exists, not for its own sake, but for the creation of the final product - the performance.

It is true, to coin Wagner's phrase (1976), that it is the audience for whom the 'kicks' of the drama have been contrived. The elements of both theatre and the art form have been exploited for their benefit. It will be the audience response upon which the success or failure of the play is judged. Thus we have the Broadway show which folds after only three performances and the endless season of "The Mousetrap", which has played for twenty-five years.

During rehearsal, however, the 'kicks' are clearly available to the actors. Their concern with the end product of performance is tied to the process of exploring the text and refining responses to it. The 'kicks' relate to the quality of the actors' development in this process. In developing a character, the actor creates personal meaning through the role relationship and expresses this in symbolic images which seek to communicate. It is a twofold process. The actors must work at the level of personal meaning as well as the meaning inherent in the art form. If the individual's expressive act is going to communicate meaning effectively, then the actor must be aware of how to use the language of the art form, e.g. movement and sound. Feeling and expressing an idea does not necessarily mean that this will be communicated to others. Command of technical skills and knowledge of how to apply them to the creative process allows the actor to more competently express emotion, as well as communicate it. The 'kicks' are now shared equally between the actor and the audience during the performance.

While watching the actors at work in the theatre space, the audience may, through identifying and empathising with the characters, create personal meaning through the role relationships (self and character). If we again use the example of the derelict, the audience through a role relationship with this character, create personal meaning and may express it in thought as "This society is unfair in the way it discriminates against the helpless".

4.0 ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

It is important to stress at this point, that the creation of meaning and change in understanding which may occur will be directly affected by the personal experiences and knowledge brought to the dramatic activity by the participants - child, actor and audience!

To be somewhat obvious and simplistic, the child from Fitzroy, the politician from Toorak, and the unemployed youth from the country, each bring personal experiences to the dramatic event which will shape their responses to the characters. Someone who lacks sympathy for the recipients of social welfare benefits may project this value onto the drama, thereby changing the personal meaning. The previously quoted audience response might become, "Society should not help those who are not prepared to respect the system and better themselves".

Finally, the creation of meaning for the child, actor and audience will not be possible unless the essential elements of imagination, identification, empathy, commitment, spontaneity, tolerance, creativity and playfulness are utilized by participants.

(For a full understanding of the definition of these elements and their importance in the dramatic act, see McLeod, J.N., *Assessment and Evaluation in Drama*, Drama Resource Centre, 1982.)

5.0 AUDIENCE

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to consider what constitutes an audience when discussing drama and theatre. There seems little point in using a concept of audience that broadly encompasses any interaction where one person listens to, or watches, another who at that moment assumes the role of communicator.

When a friend is one's audience, for example, there is little concern with shaping and ordering the statements and signals so that the best possible form is found to express the ideas. Nor is there any real fear that this audience will be unresponsive or critical of the communicator. On the contrary, there will be a high degree of responsiveness which supports, and even encourages, indulgence in self expression.

In drama-in-education and theatre, the presence of an audience is significant because:

1. It calls for the communicator/ performer to order ideas and present them in clear, dramatic images which can be interpreted by others. Thus there will be a concern with form and the external appearance of the drama.
2. Spectators are fully aware of their role as observers and their responses are constrained by the implicit and/or explicit rules of the interaction. (This was briefly referred to on p8.)
3. It promotes communication at both the 'real social', and the 'dramatic, symbolic' level. This means that the drama is shaped because of a direct awareness of the audience as separate individuals, and because the communicator/performer desires to give symbolic expression to meaning for the audience's benefit.

The audience's effect on the creation of dramatic meaning will be considered on the basis of these three factors.

5.1 ROLE OF AUDIENCE IN CHILD PLAY

It has just been stated that the presence of an audience calls for a concern with the external appearance of the drama so that others may understand the meaning of the action.

Earlier in this paper, however, we noted that the dramatic activity of child play was egocentric in nature. Because it was a personal expressive act, the external appearance to observers was of no relevance. In fact, intervention in child play by the presence of an observer, instantly destroys concentration and renders the behaviour of the participants insincere and self conscious.

Furthermore, in observing this, Peter Slade (1954) was adamant that the responses of parents and teachers to the dramatic play of children should be sensitive and intelligent if the undesirable elements of precociousness and 'showing off' were to be avoided.

Teachers are all too familiar with the child who has been thoughtlessly and constantly applauded for his/her capacity to 'act'. Such children readily adapt their behaviour to that which they consider will 'look good' to the observers.

A glaring example of this happened recently when some Grade 5 children were continuing work on a play they had been making about 'being marooned on a dangerous island'. It was the third session on the play and the children had been involved in a number of dramatic activities which focussed on immediate survival and eventual escape. Such horrors as the man-eating plant, which had prevented access to water, and the huge Lava Monster had to be mastered, if they were to live. After a concerted effort by the class, the man-eating plant (a student teacher in role) lay defeated on the ground. Burning torches had finally killed the deadly leaves!

The surge of excitement at their conquest had just subsided when a girl (whose participation in the drama had fluctuated noticeably) moved to the wall of the classroom and, sweeping her right hand to her forehead in a large theatrical gesture, exclaimed loudly, "Oh, won't someone please, please save me!". This girl was determined to reinforce in her mind, as well as the group's, that what her teacher had said last year about her being 'good' in drama, was indeed true. The incident highlights Slade's appeal for responsible adult guidance and draws sympathy for Bolton's concern (1979) that teachers who have a 'theatrical orientation to their work with children are too concerned with the outside appearance of things'.

5.2 ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN DRAMA

In the showing of a group play, the spontaneity and freedom of expression which existed in the exploratory stage of the drama, is in conflict with a need for clarity of communication. Ideas have to be ordered and dramatic images refined if the audience is to understand what is being said to them.

Although the students in role are at once both spectators, and creators, of their own actions, the presence of an audience alters the focus of the group's drama so that the spectator element becomes far more dominant. The pressure for clear communication to the class will call into question the appropriateness of the dramatic symbolic expression of the group's ideas, as well as the individual's confidence in gaining acceptance from his/her peers at a purely social level.

What is happening between members of the class at this 'real' social level may have more bearing on what is communicated, than the symbolic meaning of the group's drama. It is not unusual, for example, to find that a student who feels isolated from his peers will build into the drama a role for himself which enables a passive and peripheral participation in the drama. There is little exposure of self needed if one plays the statue in the park, or a dead body in the alley!

On the other hand, this particular individual may seek to promote himself by creating a dominant, interesting, or humorous role which the audience, he hopes, will respond to positively. In either case, this drama has to do with real social relationships and not symbolic ones.

The extent to which this kind of situation occurs will be directly related to the 'atmosphere' of the class and the learning objectives pursued by the teacher. A sensitive and constructive intervention by the teacher may change the direction of the drama so that the business which is being attended to at this real social level, can be subsumed by the symbolic drama. Dead bodies and statues, for example, may find themselves in the heart of the drama. In having to assume a spiritual life and actively answer to some higher, supernatural authority, the very students who sought to avoid the drama, could find they held the key to the ultimate truths of the actions played within the group drama.

By surprising the students into this new perspective, the teacher aims to produce a dramatic tension which moves the drama to a deeper symbolic level, but at the same time capitalizes on the opportunity for a new role to be explored at the real level of the group's social relationships.

As Ken Robinson points out (1980):

> "The actions of a group in a drama session, in role or out of it, are not just a response to what the teacher asks them to do. They are also responses to the expectations they have of each other. We do not simply drop our normal social roles just because we are asked to act out another one. On the contrary: we now have two sets of roles to handle." (p165)

If exploration and learning is to occur at these two levels, then it is clear that the atmosphere of the class must be conducive to a productive personal involvement in the drama. This means that the teacher must be very aware of the social nature of the group and work towards establishing

flexible and responsive relationships. Certainly this is not an easy task, yet it must happen if the participants are to feel that the risks they take within the drama are worthwhile. This does not mean that the atmosphere of the drama room becomes such that students feel "all must be exposed". Teachers should always be aware that what occurs in drama, and this means at the real and the symbolic level, is still an artificially created experience. What has taken place in drama, must not later, in the context of social interactions outside the class, become embarrassing or personally destructive.

"Letting it all hang out" gives licence to a self indulgence that is not conducive to the quality of feeling that carries with it the potential for learning. Actors and audience must be helped by their teacher to understand and appreciate this.

An audience in drama holds the potential to play either a negative or a positive part in the learning and development of the group. It is the teacher who takes responsibility for ensuring that the classroom ethic of 'everyone takes turns', is understood and engaged in, with full regard for the dramatic and social meanings being explored in the communication.

When a Year 7 group shows work to its drama peers, then the teacher will ask for comments or questions which relate to the attitudes and actions of characters and what meanings they hold, rather than how good or bad the play, or so and so's performance was. In the latter, the emphasis is placed on the individual. The 'drama' is primarily happening at an explicit and real social level. Unless the audience is socially responsible and responsive, the individual is trapped in a highly vulnerable situation.

For this to be avoided, the audience must be aware of how to appropriately participate in the dramatic activity as observers. The teacher plays an important part in this encounter by seeing that the responses of the audience are constrained by the conventions of the drama and art forms, as well as the realities of the social relationships.

Unlike theatre, the relationships in drama between actors and audience are fluid. At one moment the actors initiate the drama for their peers, at the next they become the audience and the recipients of the communication. This makes it easier for an audience to appreciate the role it plays in the learning.

In drama, the presence of an audience is essential to the individual's dramatic and personal development. It is this presence of an audience which moves the drama from a preoccupation with personal meaning and self expression, to a broader social context which tests the individual's knowledge and refines his/her understanding.

If handled intelligently and responsibly, the use of an audience in drama-in-education deepens and broadens the learning focus. The teacher takes responsibility for ensuring that the nature and function of the audience is primarily related to the student's stage of dramatic development and the specific objectives of the learning.

5.3 ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN THEATRE

The significant characteristic of a theatre audience is the impersonality of its relationship with the performers. Although the interaction occurs at the level of both real and symbolic relationships, there is (unlike the situation in drama) a much clearer distinction between the two.

In theatre the actors are viewed as artistic vehicles of communication and the audience criticize their performances on the basis of this. Their skills as actors, and the external appearance of the drama, is of considerable concern. Interaction at a real social level is minimal with performers perhaps adjusting their performance to the particular responses of an audience. It is also possible that an audience, because of a particular feeling for one of the cast members, may modify the way in which they identify with his/her character.

In general, however, the real social presence of the audience functions as an artificial tension which focuses and stimulates the creative energy of the actors. When the play begins, the cast and the audience share equally in the creation of personal meaning through role relationships.

If this creative act is to happen, the conventions of the actor/audience relationship must be observed. The audience tacitly agrees to be a passive participant in the role relationship. Should a member of the audience invade the acting space and abuse the elements of the drama, then the symbolic communication will disintigrate. Similarly, if the drama depends upon active audience participation and this does not occur, a dominant awareness of self will arise, destroying the symbolic drama. In both events, role confusion results and the opportunity for effective dramatic communication is dissipated. The audience did not respond according to the convention of the interaction.

We have all, at sometime, been members of an audience where the snores, the mumblings, or the crackling of celiophane left little chance of any meaningful interaction between actors, characters and audience. The execution of a golf or tennis stroke in a public performance commands silent attention from its spectators, but an actor cannot withold his words or actions whilst the audience quietens. To do so would inappropriately suggest additional meaning, as the pace and rhythm of the play carry the symbolic statements of the art form.

By pointing towards the potentially fragile nature of the role relationships created in the theatre (and this applies to drama also), it has been suggested that there is a need to use the art form responsibly, if it is to be an effective learning medium. The audience must be conscious of its role in the process as passive participant/spectator and respect the conventions of the role relationship.

6.0 A CLASSIFICATION OF DRAMATIC ACTIVITY

In his classification of drama activities, Gavin Bolton (1979) increases our understanding of what we are trying to achieve in drama-in-education and the ways we go about doing it. Although his four dramatic categories are perhaps artificial and distorting in their simplicity, the analysis does illuminate the nature of various activities used in drama. A brief summary follows:

In Bolton's TYPE A drama, activities used are basically an end in themselves - exercises such as warm ups, pair work activities, practising walking, games and story telling activities.

TYPE B drama is very like child play but it occurs in the classroom. In this play there is a living through quality to the work (usually group) but the level of thought remains focussed on plot movement. There may be hidden themes to the play, e.g. "wanting to win" or "showing off 'acting' skills".

TYPE C drama relates to that which is shown to an audience of some kind and, according to Bolton, even though the teacher wants the children to be aware of what they are feeling then they act out scenes, they are "trapped into demonstrating". He also makes the point that if children have been in school plays or theatre experiences of some kind, they will bring this orientation to the classroom. (One might wonder why he limits this to the influence of theatre experiences. It seems obvious that the perspective offered by television also promotes an 'acting out' focus.)

The final category is TYPE D drama and this is characterized by the subjective feeling/objective reality oscillation and the creation of symbolic meaning which was described earlier in the paper. This is the end of drama that Bolton works towards achieving.

6.1 LEARNING POTENTIAL IN DRAMATIC ACTIVITY

What we can see by these classifications is that not all child play or child drama occurs at the level of personal symbolic meaning. Much of the children's activity may be motivated by the need to simply acquire skills or gain physical pleasure. For example, the child repeatedly dressing and undressing the doll, may just be experiencing satisfaction in getting arms, legs and buttons through holes.

There need not be a symbolic meaning which could be stated by an observer as "She is enjoying being a fussy mother". The same could be said of children who slide with pleasure up and down the gym floor. This is likely to be purely a physical sensation, rather than a symbolic representation of the "exhilaration of skiing for one's country in the Winter Olympics". It is also possible that much of the planning that we associate with the children, 'working out what they are doing' is not the focussed shaping that we are aiming for but, simply, "mucking around".

It is not as difficult, as one might now be feeling, to make responsible and responsive judgements as to the significance of the play. When the elements of the dramatic activity are being utilised, the observer is usually aware of this when making assessment or evaluative statements about drama participation.

To return to the drama classifications and Bolton's appeal for Type D drama: it is true that in education we are, as teachers, concerned with effecting a change in the understanding of our students. In drama it is possible to achieve that understanding at its deepest level. Knowing what potential an activity has for the stimulation of such a change requires some careful thought and honest evaluation.

The teacher's next task is to find ways to structure dramatic activity so that it has the maximum potential to engage the students' interest and heighten their capacity to learn. To do this we must be sensitive to the nature of the students with whom we work and respond to them in the light of our understanding of the dramatic stages of development.

A classification of dramatic activity alone does not point towards a full understanding of drama-in-education. It stresses, once again, the need for a process orientation to drama, and in doing so, ignores the place of product in the child's development. What Elliott Eisner has pointed out in his paper "The Mythology of Art Education" (p94-5) seems to echo what many teachers feel about the process, product dilemma in drama.

"The processes we use at whatever level of skill, shape the qualities of the product that will be realized - whether that product is ideational or material. Similarly, the product or end-in-view that we aspire to create, shapes the means we employ and provides a criterion against which choices in the present is made. Further, unless teachers are mind readers, they will never be able to see the processes the child is undergoing. What we see are the manifestations of those processes - what they produce. It is from these products that we are able to make certain inferences about process."

If we are to fully exploit the learning potential of drama, then it seems logical and responsible that we do not merely emphasize its relationship with child play. Due consideration must also be given to its equal partner in man's development - theatre.

Recent literature relating to educational drama theory has neglected to provide adequate recognition of the child's natural development, and interest, in this art form. Peter Slade's seminal work in the area of Drama clearly showed the child's natural progression into the world of formal adult theatre. It seems his insistence that this process should not be hastened has been distorted, through emphasis on process, into a philosophy of drama-in-education which says the product of theatre is irrelevant.

It is time to focus again on the child's natural development in drama and allow this to be our guide in finding how to maximize the learning inherent in the medium.

7.0 DRAMATIC AGE STAGES AND THEIR ROLE IN LEARNING

In child play we accept that growth and learning occurs through the child's use of dramatic activity. The manner in which meaning is created through the role relationships was discussed in detail earlier in the paper. To understand this use of role more fully, however, it is necessary to consider the way in which particular role models are adopted so as to satisfy the child's changing needs.

John Seely (1976) suggested that three basic models of dramatic action were used by children in their dramatic play. They were the Exploratory, Illustrative and Expressive Models of imitative behaviour.

7.1 EXPLORATORY MODEL

Here the child explores situations and events in a totally unselfconscious way. The play is sincere, absorbed and has no need for an audience. It is the kind of dramatic play we see in the primary school and, at times, in the junior secondary school. Between the ages of 7-11, the child moves naturally from an absorbed and spontaneous actor role in the drama to quite conscious planning and improvising (Courtney 1980).

An embryonic awareness of the need for clarity and form has manifested itself in the constant repeating of improvisations and questions as to "how to make it better". The child is now actor and audience in a more serious approach to the drama where she/he develops a "deep sense of constructive criticism about the play of others" (Slade p57). Although the children are showing concern for form and appearance, Slade warns that they should not be allowed to perform their improvisation on a stage at the end of a room. As these children lack a full understanding of perspective, to place them in a situation where this is required, promotes self consciousness and encourages showing off. Children at this stage naturally use a theatre-in-the-round approach to planning. Showing their plays in the more adult and complex acting space distorts and may retard their creative development in drama. An example of this distortion was cited earlier in the paper.

7.2 THE ILLUSTRATIVE MODEL

Children of 12-13 years of age have left the exploratory dramatic stage and now use imitation as a natural aid to communication. (This model of dramatic action is used by adults and children alike.)

Adolescents enjoy mimicking their parents and teachers when illustrating incidents to their peers. In doing so, the students move quickly into stereotypes and caricatures which serve to highlight the important details of the event. Through exaggeration of the dramatic action, the imitator can entertain his audience and, at the same time, evoke their sympathy. There is an awareness of the actor/audience relationship and a conscious attempt to use manipulation as part of the communication.

In drama, students at this level of development often pose the most problematic for teachers. The adolescent turmoil and identity confusion that occurs at this time means that there is likely to be a hyper awareness

of audience. This sensitivity and vulnerability within the group, conflicts with a keen desire to use drama as a means of communication. Stock characters and stereotyped roles offer some security in presentation and afford opportunities for outrageous cathartic behaviour.

The following example is typical of what occurs in drama at this stage:

The class is exploring the notion of authority and in this improvisation, A is playing the role of the principal, while B assumes the role of a student who has been caught smoking. During the scene, A exaggerates the role of the principal into a tyrannical despot, using snatches of a German accent to complement his loud, authoritative voice. The caricature is further encouraged by the audience's laughter and B, struggling to protect his self identity, undermines his partner's character by attacking his authority, telling him how stupid he is and asserting, "I'll smoke any time I want to". Laughter and cheers from the audience are now for B.

There is no doubt that the caricatures have entertained, heightened interest and evoked sympathy from the observers. There is a general identification with the characters as portrayed; the audience know what is being said about this figure of authority and share the fantasy of B's actions in this situation. Everyone has a laugh, enjoying the moment for its outrageous cathartic nature. The humour is firmly pinned to the group's understanding of what really occurs in such situations. They know the helpless humiliation of submission to authority. Humour, stereotype and caricature express this safely.

Given this stage of development, the following situation is also bound to occur. In a new pair now, A takes the role of the principal seriously and, during the improvisation, questions the student about the incident with a concerned, counselling approach. B, however, needs the protection of exaggeration and so plays the 'dumb student', giving one word responses in a 'spasso' fashion. The audience laughs tentatively at this but the improvisation breaks down.

The physical, emotional and intellectual development of this age group varies enormously. Within drama classes, the differences in stages of dramatic development means there is often disagreement within the groups in relation to expectations of the drama. For this reason, many teachers

complain that Year 8 Drama offers the most difficult challenge in terms of curriculum planning.

Richard Courtney (1980) points out that 12-15 year olds are, "particularly concerned with role 'appearance'". The learning about self occurs through improvisations where students test out different effects of particular role behaviour. They constantly explore situations, friendships, job possibilities and other social realities.

> "The student's method of solving the dramatic problems - that is, imagining hypothetical situations, deducing their consequences, and then testing to see if consequences hold true - is the essential method of modern science. Drama provides the emotional basis for rational thought."
> (Courtney 1980)

The following example illustrates this very clearly:

In a Year 9 drama session, the teacher had divided the class into four - two groups of boys and two of girls. The task of each group was to prepare one person for a blind date and, in a disco scene later in the session, the couples would meet, adopting the behaviour suggested by the group members. The success or failure of the meeting would test out the appropriateness of the suggestions. Interest in the drama was high and the preparation of the 'dates' occurred at a very serious level. All details were given attention, including how to do the hair, what clothes to be worn, topics to be spoken about and personality traits to be avoided, or exaggerated. Towards the end of the disco scene, all members of the class were intent on observing the interaction of the dates. Lively discussion then followed as they clarified the success or failure of specific aspects of the adopted behaviour. The drama had provided the emotional basis for rational thought.

It is important to note that because of varying stages of development in this 12-15 age group, the students will find difficulty in coping with performance in a more public sense than the classroom. As we have seen in the previous example of dramatic action, the role confusion of early adolescence affects the student's ability as communicator. Sustaining commitment to role and having an appreciation of and respect for the art form in a theatre context, makes unfair demands on these students. Drama has an important contribution to make in allowing the students to work through this period and develop a firmer sense of self identity.

It is important also to be aware that teachers often worry about this change in the drama of their students and may even try to ignore it. They continue to follow the exploratory model in the secondary school and work hard to create an artificial and evocative atmosphere to regain the absorption and unawareness of audience that characterized exploratory play. It is likely that this approach will move participants at a raw emotional level rather than a symbolic one. Depending on the length and intensity of the experience, a state verging on the hysterical and/or hypnotic may result.

A drama teacher working with a group of Year 10 students had decided to explore various emotional states such as anger, joy, fear and pain. The teacher talked the students into a relaxed state on the floor and then led them into a mental exploration of each emotion. Coloured spots were used sparingly in combination with quiet but appropriately evocative music. Although the teacher had planned that the exercise would be a brief one, it continued for some forty minutes. When the exercise was finally concluded, three students remained on the floor in a semi-hypnotic state. Obviously there had been insufficient thought in relation to the exercise and an inadequate awareness of time during the running of the session.

A similar situation can evolve in party or drama camp games such as "Assassin", when in a totally darkened environment, the murderer stalks his trapped victims. The longer the game lasts and the louder the death shrieks become, the more likely the hysteria!

In these situations, there is such an emotional involvement that no reflection or objectivity is possible. Whilst the participants in an event of this nature may enthusiastically claim its value, it is more than likely that the experience has engaged the senses only. It may be thrilling, but the heightened emotions will not be conducive to a learning experience.

7.3 EXPRESSIVE MODEL

As was the case with the illustrative stage of dramatic action, this model is also concerned with communication. Important differences are related to the complexity of the subject matter explored and the less intimate nature of the audience with whom ideas are shared. Seely (1976) draws on a comparison between this type of communication and the theatre of Bertolt Brecht.

> "Rather than analysing aspects of behaviour in interpersonal relationships, the speaker is concerned to communicate both factual information about an event and comment on its general social significance. This is close to the expressive form of adult theatre but (as Brecht makes clear) it is a form of theatre in which <u>what</u> is communicated is important to both actors and audience." (p22)

It is at this time that students constantly demand the opportunity to make a play and perform it. Exploration of a theme chosen by the students allows the ideal structure for teachers to use dramatic activity to experience a multitude of perspectives related to the topic. It is very easy now to use the drama to stimulate the students' search for further information. If satisfactory exploration and vitality of learning is to occur, then an appropriate input of ideas and stimulus material will be needed.

A more intense interest in the elements of theatre and the art form is also awakened and explicit learning is needed in these areas.

Reflection and discussion of work will focus on the effectiveness of theatrical images and ways in which these can be improved. It is at this time that the teacher's knowledge of theatre and form can be used responsibly to provide the connections needed by the students if they are to more competently control their drama. The students are involved in the same twofold process of creating personal meaning and simultaneously finding a way to clearly communicate this, that was described as the actor's experience in rehearsing for performance.

It is between these ages of 15-18 that students enter the "Role Truth" stage (Courtney 1980) and acquire a confidence in adopting and sustaining a host of different roles. Individuals now have an ability to feel a strong sense of self (the me) yet readily extend this concept to incorporate, without threat, a vast number of other masks or roles (the not me).

In the classroom, the personal and dramatic maturity of the students enables them to play a far more independent part in the use and direction of their drama. There is now a flexibility in working in the medium that enables a student to use drama in a highly personal exploration of subject matter as successfully as she/he can communicate meaning to a large audience.

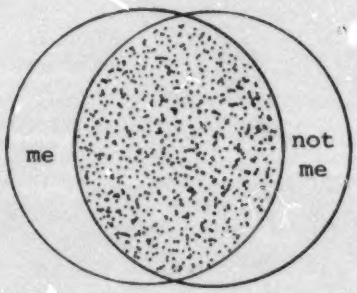
> "It is by this stage that there is a somewhat equal balance between the student as actor, planner and communicator."
>
> (Courtney p60)

Teachers find at Year 10 that they are spending perhaps a term in the year to explore topics such as "Adolescence", "The Family in Society", and "Power and Authority". The work generally culminates in performance to small audiences comprised of peers, teachers and family. Both actors and audience are interested in the communication that is to happen. The audience wants to understand what is being said to them by these actors.

At Year 11 and 12, students are still keen to make public comments about social issues. More complex subjects will be tackled and expressed through a variety of theatre experiences. These may include dance drama, documentary theatre and rock musicals, which blast out their social concerns through music, singing and improvised drama. At this "role truth" stage, many students now want to take scripts and explore involved issues and attitudes inherent in the playwright's creation. Literary and dramatic symbols which are complex and rich in meaning, will be tackled by the more mature students. The plays, for example, of Greek and Elizabethan theatre may often be explored.

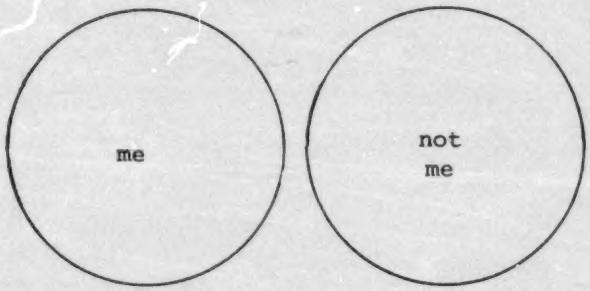
Figure 4

Role Relationship



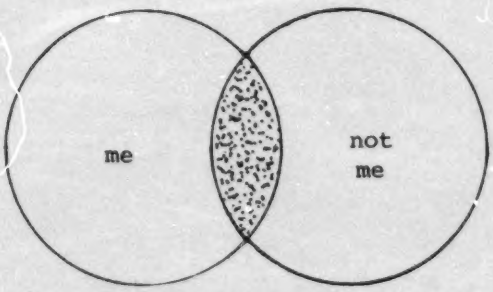
Self readily incorporates the other

Effect of Audience

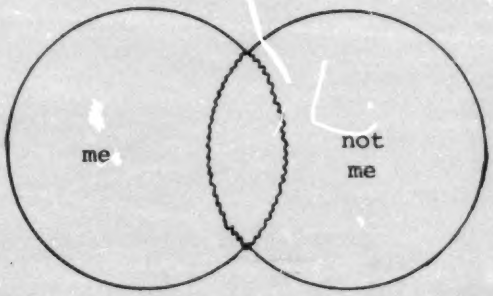


Role destruction

Exploratory role model

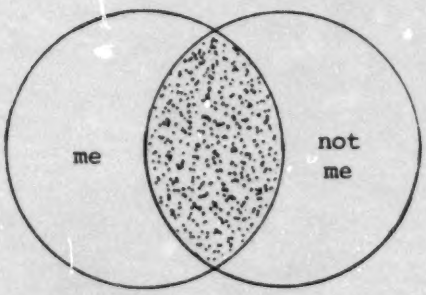


Self marginally incorporates the other

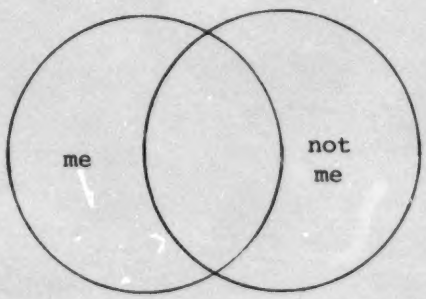


Role fragmentation

Illustrative role model



Equilibrium between self and other



Role maintenance

Expressive role model

7.4 SUMMARY AND PERSPECTIVE OF DRAMATIC AGE STAGES

Having taken time to discuss in detail the stages of dramatic development, it is also necessary to stress that these are categories which offer important, but general insights into the individual's development through drama. At each year level of the school there will be variations of growth within the class which complicates day to day decision making. Drama is not alone in this respect; other subjects face the same problem. In many ways, however, drama has more flexibility in manipulating its curricula so that these differences can be catered for. If a group of Year 10 students is obviously functioning in a predominantly Illustrative model of dramatic behaviour, then this can be accommodated. But this does not deny that there should be an awareness of the need to encourage development. It is very easy to allow for an attitude of "It's where the kids are at!" to justify attitudes which are neither challenging nor extending in any way.

8.0 THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE DRAMA

8.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD PLAY

How the drama looks to observers of Child Play, as was said earlier, is irrelevant. It is, however, important to the participant. What is felt by the child, is what the external actions of the play must carry. Repetition of scenes during play indicates that there is an awareness of the appropriateness of form. When the child is content and ends the play it reflects a satisfactory expression of inner meaning in the external dramatic actions.

When play with others begins, the way the drama looks, will have to satisfy all players. From about the age of 7, the group play of children becomes concerned with shape and form. Rules are often established as to what constitutes "proper" ways to make a play (Courtney 1980 p51). There is also an increasing need for children to share their work with others, and teachers receive requests from groups to show their improvisations to class members. As the children have not yet developed a full understanding of beginnings and ends, the showing is often less satisfying for the audience than the actors. Large circle formations are used by the actors but whilst the appearance of the drama may be understood by those participating, observers are still likely to be mystified at times.

8.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION

In the natural play of children, concern with the 'appearance' of drama becomes increasingly important. Despite protests to the contrary by many teachers and drama theorists, what the student drama looks like is of vital importance.

The student's ability to participate effectively in dramatic activities will be hindered if the dramatic expression of feelings and throughts is undeveloped, sloppy and/or inappropriate! Even if the emphasis of the drama is on problem solving, personal development or attitude, it is necessary that interactions within the drama are clear.

For the scene to develop participants must be able to recognize, in the first instance, the sequence of actions, and secondly, understand what meaning they carry at a symbolic level.

Heathcote pays attention to the external appearance of the drama in her work because she sees the connections this has with inner feelings and 'knowing'. She does not accept 'sloppy' action as this would deny the drama its integrity. We see this when watching her work with children in America on "The Building Of A Nation". During the drama, a girl who was pretending to cry in grief over a dead relative, became the stimulus for Heathcote to stop the action. What she was aware of here was that the external actions were artificial and getting in the way of the girl really coming to know something about the loss of this family member. She discussed this openly with the child and the group, and together they found a new direction for the drama which carried potential for learning.

Such a decision is not an easy one to take. Many teachers feel that they will repress the child's creativity and spontaneity by interferring in the drama in such a way. But what Heathcote did in this action was to elevate the quality of learning for the girl, and the group, by paying careful attention to the external appearance of the drama. The children were discovering something vital about feeling and knowing, and about finding appropriate dramatic form for that knowledge. Impulsive action had given way to a more creative exploration and expression of grief. In a quiet coming together of the people of the village, personal memories of the dead man were shared with his mother (the girl) and in this way a new understanding of a deep and permanent loss was gained through the warmth of living memories.

The same principle, nevertheless, holds true in a more mundane situation. Consider the following: a Year 9 group are exploring employment and job opportunity. In the improvisation, A is seeking the job and B is the General Manager of the Company. A walks jauntily to the door and, with accompanying giggles, knocks out a rhythmic rat-a-tat-tat...tat-tat...TAT-TAT! The teacher now has to make a decision, based on the appearance of the drama, about the learning within the activity. What was seen inferred no commitment to the drama from either an internal or external perspective. If the drama was stopped at this point, and time taken to establish what the character was feeling as she knocks on the door, then both the quality of the expressive act and the potential for learning within it, could have been upgraded. As the particular improvisation has been used for its personal and social relevance, then the questioning or comments must relate to the attitude of the character, and not to the student's characterization. An intervention such as "All right stop a minute" (turns to audience) "Is this a good beginning to a scene?" will instantly focus the learning on the acting skills of A, rather than appropriate behaviour when applying for jobs.

8.3 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ART FORM

Communicating through drama becomes increasingly important to students . The extent to which this communication is effective depends upon the appearance of the drama. To state the obvious, the actors may 'feel' with all the sincerity and depth in the world, but if this is not able to be expressed outwardly, then meaningful contact with an audience will not be made. If teachers do not pay attention to the aesthetics of drama, a disservice will have been done to the drama as well as the students. John Allen (1979) reflects something of this feeling when he says:

> "The repeated emphasis on drama as 'learning by doing' is to devalue drama until it is virtually unrecognizable as art" (p106)

and, later:

> "A child when improvising is indeed in one respect exploring an area of experience; but he is doing so not only because it is fun but because he is trying to embody that feeling in form. This is what art (and life too) is all about. And the maturer he is, the more capable he will be of a full embodiment of his ideas..." (p115)

9.0 DRAMA AS ART - TEACHER AS PLAYWRIGHT

Theatre is not seen as the only art product of drama. Many teachers subscribe to the views of Gavin Bolton who claims that Type D Drama, which combines the notion of child play with the elements of theatre, is an art form in itself.

Without pushing the definition too far, it is worth giving consideration to the type of drama which takes the child's capacity for spontaneous play and consciously focusses it through the elements of the art form. Both Bolton and Heathcote create this kind of drama experience because they believe that it is the only way that students can move towards a moment when they will know at a "true gut level...what it is to be human" (Wagner 1976). Building dramatic tension lies at the heart of this kind of learning.

Certainly drama teachers are conscious of exploiting aspects of theatre magic when they darken the classroom and suspend what lights they can afford from the ceiling. A record player is also highly valued, as is a box of various objects, fabric lengths and 'costumes'. When carefully used, these are the aids which can help build belief and heighten the meaning of drama. Of course, they can also be interesting for their own sake, but the learning focus may remain superficial and external.

In this instance, the teacher might well have functioned as a theatre technician rather than a playwright.

When Bolton and Heathcote exploit the art form, they do so in more subtle ways. Statements such as, "We must hurry, the sun is about to come up" or "I hear slow, stumbling footsteps", are made from within the drama but, nevertheless, use the elements of light, sound, movement and suspense to build dramatic tension.

Both these teachers also stress the importance of finding concrete objects which can act as symbols in the drama. A key, a cross, a gun, are obvious examples of simple items which hold meanings capable of stirring deep responses in individuals. Like playwrights, the teachers are consciously manipulating the drama and building a dramatic tension which will liberate the participants into creating meaning beyond the literal.

10.0 EDUCATIONAL DRAMA AND THEATRE

There is no doubt that when elements of the art form combine with all the elements of dramatic activity, the richest of creative learning happens. This does not mean, however, that theatre should be denied a legitimate place in the drama curriculum. For if, in emphasizing self-expression and personal meaning we devalue the need for an understanding and appreciation of the art form, then clearly we deprive the individual of the fullest possible development through dramatic activity.

> "In working through a medium of expression, the individual is guided by a sense of form. But she/he is also guided by a sense of communication. And this helps take us to the heart of it..." (Robinson 1980)

As individuals progress in drama, there is an increasingly earnest desire to refine personal meaning and shape it through the constraints of the art form. The private nature of children's dramatic acitivity changes to acknowledge the public, social world of others. It is in this social context that the creative, communicative function of theatre is needed as a further extension of the learning experience. Intelligently handled theatre experiences, at the appropriate stage of dramatic development, are a necessary and natural part of the individual's drama programme.

In an educational context however, theatre should not simply offer a pleasant social opportunity for building self confidence and developing

interpersonal relationships. Nor should it merely be an exercise in artistic technique. Such a limited approach devalues the function of dramatic activity in the learning process.

It is the responsibility of educational drama and educational theatre, to ensure that participants are engaged in experiences which actively explore the complexity of the human condition. Some plays obviously have an extremely limited capacity to do this.

SUMMARY 11.0

First, in attempting to resolve the methodological and philosophical dichotomies between drama-in-education and theatre, it was necessary to firstly consider drama and its contribution to education in an historical context. The 'progressive' educational philosophies of the 1960's were seen as a major contributing factor in the drama versus theatre debate.

Second, it was then stated that individuals created personal meaning through dramatic activity by establishing symbolic role relationships between the 'me' and 'not me'. Both the form and function of the concrete dramatic action varied according to the individual's stage of dramatic development. Child play, drama and theatre were three distinct forms of dramatic activity discussed in terms of the creation of personal meaning.

Third, it was felt that an analysis of the stages of dramatic development was necessary if teachers were to understand the drama/theatre relationship and design and implement drama curricula that reflected this understanding and offered students maximum learning potential. To this end, Seely's three models of imitative play were discussed in terms of practical classroom experiences. Slade's theories of child drama and Courtney's 'role appearance' and 'role truth' categories added further important insights.

Fourth, as role relationships are essential to learning in both drama and theatre, some of the factors relating to building and sustaining these relationships were identified. Understanding the conventions of actor/audience interactions was seen to be a necessary element in the creation of meaning through dramatic activity where observers were present.

Fifth, a direct relationship was made between the external appearance of the drama, the students' stage of dramatic development and the quality of the learning experience. Knowing how to manipulate art form and theatre elements to create challenging drama was discussed in relation to the work of Heathcote and Bolton.

Finally, the paper has attempted to show that the relationship between drama and theatre is embedded in the individual's search for personal meaning and his/her desire to express and communicate this in dramatic form. Theatre is a natural and necessary aspect of the individual's development in drama.

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